

Message Text

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FOLLOWING SENT SECSTATE WASHDC INFO ASMARA USCINCEUR FROM
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E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR MASS EAID ET US

SUBJ: FIRST REFLECTIONS ON RECENT TURN OF EVENTS

1. SUMMARY. THE REMOVAL OF GENERAL AMAN AND THE EXECUTION OF 60 POLITICAL PRISONERS ON THE NIGHT OF NOVEMBER 23 MARKED A FURTHER RADICALIZATION OF THE ETHIOPIAN REVOLUTION. WE EXPECT THE "RADICALS" IN THE ARMED FORCES COORDINATING COMMITTEE (AFCC) TO EXERCISE GREATER POWER IN THE NEW STAGE, HOWEVER LONG OR SHORT IT MAY BE, BUT IT IS STILL DIFFICULT TO FORESEE WHAT FORM THEIR RADICALISM WILL TAKE. A KEY ISSUE IN THIS RESPECT IS WHETHER THE
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PRESENT LEADERSHIP WILL WISH TO RETAIN THE TRADITIONAL

CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE US, OR WILL TURN TO THE SOVIETS AND/OR CHINESE FOR MILITARY ASSISTANCE. WHILE IT WILL PROBABLY BE DESIRABLE TO CONTINUE US ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS AT NORMAL LEVELS, WE INTEND TO AVOID FOR THE MOMENT CONCLUSION OF NEW AGREEMENTS PURSUANT TO THOSE PROGRAMS LEST THEY BE MISREAD AS A SIGN OF APPROVAL OR INDIFFERENCE TO THE SATURDAY NIGHT MASSACRE. END SUMMARY.

2. MOST OF THE MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS IN THE COURSE OF THE ONGOING ETHIOPIAN REVOLUTION SINCE THE ORIGINAL UPHEAVAL IN JANUARY THROUGH MARCH HAVE BEEN MARKED BY THE ACQUISITION OF GREATER POWER BY RADICAL ELEMENTS AT THE EXPENSE OF MODERATES. THE PRINCIPAL TURNING POINTS IN THIS RESPECT WERE THE SECOND GREAT WAVE OF ARRESTS AT THE END OF JUNE, THE REMOVAL OF ENDALKACHEW MAKONNEN ON JULY 22, THE DEPOSITION OF THE EMPEROR ON SEPTEMBER 12, AND NOW THE DISMISSAL OF GENERAL AMAN AND THE MASSACRE OF NOVEMBER 23. IT IS PROBABLE THAT THE RADICALS IN THE AFCC WILL WIELD EVEN MORE POWER IN THE NEW CHAPTER WHICH IS JUST BEGINNING THAN THEY DID WHILE THE MODERATELY INCLINED AMAN WAS CHIEF OF STATE.

3. IT IS FAR EASIER, HOWEVER, TO DESIGNATE MANY MEMBERS OF THE AFCC AS RADICAL THAN IT IS TO DESCRIBE THE NATURE OF THEIR RADICALISM. THE PRINCIPAL REASON FOR THIS IS THAT MOST OF THESE RADICALS APPEAR TO BE CONSTRUCTING THEIR OWN PROGRAMS AND PRINCIPLES AS THEY GO ALONG RATHER THAN CARRYING OUT A PREVIOUSLY ESTABLISHED IDEOLOGICAL OR PARTY PROGRAM. WE DO NOT KNOW VERY MUCH ABOUT THEIR PRINCIPLES EXCEPT THAT THEIR EMPHASIS HAS BEEN ON HARSH PUNISHMENT RATHER THAN FAIR TRIALS, THAT THEY INCLINE TO FAVOR VIGOROUS MILITARY METHODS IN ERITRE, AND THAT RAPID SWEEPING MEASURES OF LAND REFORM APPEAL MORE TO THEM THAN A STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH. IN THE FIELD OF FOREIGN POLICY WE KNOW THAT THEY ARE AS A GROUP CONSIDERABLY MORE INCLINED THAN THE MODERATES TO ADVOCATE TURNING TO THE SOVIETS OR CHINESE AS A MEANS OF SOLVING THE SOMALI THREAT. JUST HOW GREAT THE LIKELIHOOD IS THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT WILL MOVE IN THIS DIRECTION IS FAR FROM CLEAR, HOWEVER.

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4. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE SELECTION OF A NEW CHIEF OF STATE WILL PROVIDE US WITH SIGNIFICANT EVIDENCE REGARDING THE INTENTION OF THE PRESENT DIRG LEADERS. IT SEEMS QUITE LIKELY, HOWEVER, THAT THE NEW CHIEF OF STATE WILL BE CHOSEN LARGELY FOR HIS WILLINGNESS TO TAKE ORDERS FROM THE DIRG. HIS SELECTION MAY THEREFORE LEAVE US LITTLE WISER THAN BEFORE.

5. THUS FAR INTO THE ETHIOPIAN REVOLUTION US POLICY HAS BEEN GUIDED BY TWO PRINCIPLES. THE FIRST IS THAT WE SHOULD NOT ONLY AVOID INTERVENTION IN THE SITUATION BUT SHOULD TRY HARD TO AVOID ACTIONS WHICH COULD READILY BE INTERPRETED AS INTERVENTION. THE SECOND PRINCIPLE HAS BEEN TO CONTINUE ALL OF OUR ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS AT FULL STRENGTH IN THE BELIEF THAT THIS WOULD HELP TO STRENGTHEN THE POSITION OF THOSE WHO WILL STRUGGLE FOR A CONTINUATION OF CLOSE AND FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH THE US. IT WILL PROBABLY REMAIN DESIRABLE TO OBSERVE THESE TWO PRINCIPLES UNDER THE NEW CIRCUMSTANCES. HOWEVER, THE INFORMATION WHICH WE OBTAIN DURING THE COMING WEEKS REGARDING THE CAPABILITIES, POLICIES AND INTENTIONS OF THE NEW LEADERSHIP WILL PROVIDE VALUABLE ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE REGARDING THE POLICIES WE SHOULD PURSUE.

6. IN THE MEANTIME, WE MUST CONSIDER IMMEDIATELY WHAT OUR ATTITUDE SHOULD BE THIS WEEK REGARDING THE THREE MAJOR US ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS.

7. WITH REGARD TO DROUGHT ASSISTANCE, WE NOW HAVE AUTHORIZATION TO SIGN THE RECOVERY AND REHABILITATION AGREEMENT FOR THREE MILLION DOLLARS. TO DO SO NOW, HOWEVER, WOULD BE INTERPRETED BY MANY AS AN INDICATION THAT WE APPROVED OF THE SATURDAY NIGHT MASSACRE. WE WILL THEREFORE TAKE NO ACTION FOR THE TIME BEING TO ARRANGE FOR A SIGNATURE OF THIS AGREEMENT. WITH REGARD TO ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE, THE GOVERNMENT HAS NOT YET INDICATED WHETHER IT IS PREPARED TO SIGN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR LOAN WITH THE SPECIFIC COMMITMENTS ON DEVELOPMENT EXPENDITURES WHICH WE HAVE PROPOSED. WE WILL MAKE NO EFFORTS AT PRESENT TO EXPEDITE ITS DECISION. WITH REGARD TO MILITARY ASSISTANCE, WE WILL NOT DISCUSS FOR THE TIME BEING ANY SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES
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TO THE GRANT AID PORTION OF THE PROGRAM SUCH AS THE F-5A ISSUE. SINCE THE DECISION INTERFACE ON THE FMS CASH AND CREDIT PORTION OF THE PROGRAM IS IN WASHINGTON WITH THE ETHIOPIAN AMABASSADOR, NO CHANGE OF COURSE IS REQUIRED HERE IN THAT AREA. WYMAN UNQUOTE INGERSOLL

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